

Carlsbad, NM – Tuesday, Congressman Harry Teague announced that a new program designed to grow renewable energy education and jobs could be coming to southern New Mexico. Funding, secured by Harry Teague in the Labor Health Education Appropriations Act passed by the House, would allow Western New Mexico University (WNMU) to develop a program that will train New Mexicans to fill coming jobs in the biofuel industry through the creation of a biofuel curriculum at area colleges. The program aims to give students the opportunity to get involved in the biofuels industry and take part in training programs that will prepare them for jobs in renewable energy.

“This effort shows New Mexico’s continued work to become a leader in renewable energy by continuing to find ways to create jobs and ensure that skilled New Mexicans have direct access to biofuel projects across the state. As we work to expand our renewable energy, create jobs, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil by doing it all here in New Mexico, it is essential that we continue to train potential employees to support the industry,” said Harry Teague. “We have already seen significant federal investment in algal biofuels projects now underway in Southern New Mexico in projects like the Sapphire algae-based biofuel refinery in Columbus and the CEHMM facility currently operating in Carlsbad. By developing a trained labor pool, we can make the most of these initiatives and attract additional investment in New Mexico. I want to thank Western New Mexico University and the Southwest Biofuels Association for working with me to ensure that young New Mexicans will have access to the education and training they need to secure competitive, stable renewable energy careers.”

This \$300,000 initiative will include close coordination and involvement of the biofuels industry in student training to ensure that opportunities in the region are fully utilized. The Southwest Biofuels Association (SWBA) will work as a liason between the education and industry partners. WNMU would share the funding with similar programs being developed at Dona Ana Community College and New Mexico State University - Carlsbad.

“This program is a great advancement for the region. Not only will it create jobs in an industry that is developing at a fast pace, but it means that New Mexico students and residents stay in the area rather than looking for employment in neighboring states,” said Maria Zannes, Outreach Director for the Southwest Biofuels Association (SWBA). “This adds an essential component to the [New Mexico State Plan for Biofuels Leadership](#) and is just another example of Harry Teague following through on his commitment to making New Mexico a leader in the field.”

Harry Teague discussed the program with WNMU administrators during a visit to the campus earlier in August. His staff hosted another meeting with university administrators today to further discuss and develop the program in the area.

The legislation awaits final approval in the Senate.